

Statement of R. Gil Kerlikowske
Director, National Drug Control Policy
Remarks at the Official Swearing-In Ceremony
Officiated by Supreme Court Justice Anthony M. Kennedy

June 19, 2009

I am honored to be here today. I want to thank my family, my wife Anna, our mothers -- although they could not join us -- my daughter Kim and her husband Tom, and children Rosie, A.J., and Tad. I also want to thank my cousin Carroll and her husband Chris.

And those who travelled far to be here: Dr. Mike Miller, we grew up together; our friends, Elizabeth and Fox; Gwen and Jim; Alyssa and John; Benita and Charles; and Carl Mack, we were tased together but that's a story for a different day!

Thank you all for coming.

I'd like to express my deep appreciation to Justice Kennedy and his wife Mary, to Chris Lu, for making this occasion special, and to Vice President Biden, a person whom I am privileged to have known and worked with over many years on projects and legislation that have made our country safer.

Let me also thank the dedicated and energetic staff at ONDCP, those who are in the audience and those in the office doing the important work of drug policy.

This is an exciting time for our office and it is an honor to join the staff as we prepare the President's and the Nation's drug strategy. It will be a strategy that leans forward, that changes the conversation on our drug problem, that builds upon the successes of past initiatives, and engages all parts of the system in its development and execution.

During the last five weeks I crisscrossed the country visiting police departments, drug courts, treatment centers, and research programs and I can tell you that I have never seen more collaborative efforts being made to enforce laws, provide treatment and recovery, understand the disease of addiction, and identify methods to prevent drug abuse.

In my meetings with representatives from Mexico, Colombia, and Afghanistan I have heard about the courageous efforts to fight the cartels and protect the people of those countries. I have also heard appreciation for the support of this Administration and the American people.

In closing, I am so very fortunate to have the support of family and friends, the President and Vice President, and the staff of ONDCP as we enthusiastically do our part in America's effort to end drug abuse.

Thank you.